

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 005081

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IECI SCRUTINIZES COMPLAINT PROCESS AMIDST
HEIGHTENED SUNNI ARAB CLAIMS OF ELECTION FRAUD

Classified By: Robert Political Counselor S. Ford
for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (U) See paragraph 12 for recommended press guidance.

2. (C) Summary: On December 21 there were more denunciations of election fraud while the election commission investigated specific charges and complete the vote count. UN election team leader Jenness told us December 21 that the number of complaints had reached 1,100 but only two dozen appeared serious. None of those was likely to change the results of even a single seat in the 275 member future parliament, he said. He added he would work with the Iraqi election commissioners to try to get ahead of the media coverage of fraud allegations. Poloffs talked with a series of Sunni Arab political leaders, urging that they drop their call for a rerun of the Baghdad election and that they tone down their rhetoric in the media while the election commission does its work. We can expect even more Sunni Arab unhappiness when they see how the parliamentary seat numbers are shaping up that will give the Shia 555 list a wide margin over the Sunni Arabs. Over the longer term, we have to focus Sunni Arab attention on how to join the government and protect their interests from inside the cabinet. End Summary.

IECI AND UNAMI ADDRESS SUNNI ARAB CONCERNS

3. (C) Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) UN Commissioner Craig Jenness told PolCouns on December 21 that the IECI complaint review process is moving forward amidst public dissatisfaction from Sunni Arab political parties. Jenness stated that earlier in the day SRSQ Ashraf Qazi met with Tariq al-Hashimi from the Iraqi Consensus Front (Tawafuq List 618) where al-Hashimi called the electoral process into question, disputed the preliminary results for Baghdad, and demanded a rerun of the election in Baghdad. Qazi countered these claims and told al-Hashimi that the IECI took all election-related allegations seriously. According to Jenness, Qazi urged al-Hashimi to tone down the rhetoric and not over-politicize the process while the IECI continued with its administrative investigations.

A Technician's View: Still a Clean Election

4. (C) Jenness emphasized to PolCouns that the IECI was acting on all complaints that were sent to the IECI, which currently number over 1,100. (The number is still growing, but more slowly, as the voting materials are processed at the Tally Center.) Jenness pointed out that given nearly 32,000 polling stations, the over 350,000 registered observers and monitors for these elections, and the wide-reaching public outreach campaign on the complaint process, the actual number of complaints is not surprising and represents an average of one complaint for every thirty polling stations. Jenness doubted that the 25 "red" complaints to date would do more than change some ballot boxes or at most a few polling stations nationwide. He admitted, however, that the IECI lacked a credible public relations campaign regarding their response to the complaints, and promised to beef up their PR programs starting with the press conference scheduled for later in the day.

5. (C) Jenness pointed out that pre-election complaint investigations resulted in fines of 5 million Iraqi Dinar (about USD \$3500) levied against nine political parties. While that amount is not very large, it still demonstrated the IECI's resolved to see administrative investigations through to their proper completion. Post-election investigations, he pointed out, could result in sanctions that include voiding ballots for a specific ballot box, polling station, or even a polling center, depending on the severity and

extent of the violation. This type of sanction represents a potential loss of thousands of votes.

The Sunni Arabs Make their Case

16. (C) In separate telephone conversations with Poloff on December 21 Tawafuq Front leaders Adnan al-Duleimi and Tariq al-Hashimi both stood by their protest of the election results. Duleimi demanded a re-vote in Baghdad. Poloff warned him to let the electoral commission have a chance to study complaints and play its role. Taking this dispute to the media right away would only make the issue harder to solve, not easier, Poloff said. There are many intermediate steps that can be taken to address complaints short of a full-out re-vote. Most seriously, Sunni leaders like Salah al-Mutlak were using the complaints to threaten violence, a step that could undo the progress made on December 15. Duleimi denounced Mutlak out of hand, insisting that he does not represent the Sunni Arab community and would not have won any seats in the election at all without "outside" support. He insisted that he opposed violence in any form and wanted a peaceful resolution of the issue.

17. (C) Tareq al-Hashimi said he had held a positive meeting on the subject with UN SRSG Ashraf Qazi that morning and then reviewed the details of his complaint. Hashemi said that there was no way to properly evaluate the number of votes lost because of fraud throughout Iraq. He said ballots had been invalidated in Diyala, monitors turned away in Kirkuk, and Basra Sunni Arabs had been mysteriously disenfranchised. Some 63,000 people voted for his list in Basra even though the Sunni Arabs there represent some 25 percent of the population or some 200,000 voters. (Others put the Sunni Arab population in Basra at about 5 percent, making the results about as expected).

18. (C) Most seriously, Hashemi said, his observers had found a major discrepancy in Baghdad between their vote count observations and those ultimately announced by the IECI. The Tawafuq observers counted 1,120,000 votes for the UIA and 660,000 for Tawafuq. The ultimate announcement was off by several hundred thousand, he said, bringing it to 1.4 million for UIA and 440,000 for Tawafuq. He insisted that the Sunni Arab community would not remain silent if its concerns were not addressed. However, he stopped short of calling for a re-vote. He also changed the subject when Poloff asked for a copy of his internal tally documents supporting his count.

19. (C) Abid Mutlak al-Jaburi, who headed the Sunni Arab Tawaffuq List 618 in Kirkuk province, warned PolCouns December 21 that the Baghdad numbers announcement had changed the mood of the Sunni Arab community dramatically. Now the Sunni Arabs felt the Shia had cheated and the Sunni Arabs again were in a corner. He said people had started asking him why they should trust the Americans who appeared to be "in league with Iran" against the Sunni Arabs. He urged that there be new elections in Baghdad, as well as Kirkuk and Basrah.

110. (C) PolCouns cautioned that a new election in Baghdad was hard to imagine. He urged al-Jaburi to remember the most important goal for the Sunni Arabs was to share in the government and to maximize gains by looking at alliances with the Kurds and the Allawi list. PolCouns urged Jaburi to (a) keep Sunni threats out of the media as compromises likely will be necessary later; (b) weigh in with the Ulema Council - with whom Jaburi speaks - to stay out of the media and (c) let the election commission do its work. Jaburi did not argue but complained that the Sunni Arabs had to receive a gesture or the political momentum from the election would be lost. (He thought reducing the Shia 555 list down to 100 seats would be face-saving enough. PolCouns reminded him that counting votes is one thing and making political deals is another.)

111. (SBU) Separately, members of the Allawi List 731 hosted a meeting with the Tawaffuq List 618 and Sunni Arab hard-liner Salih Mutlak's 667 list during which they denounced alleged massive election fraud and promised to pursue redress. The three lists, joined by several smaller lists, announced they would form a follow-up committee and, notably, a media and communications committee as well. PolFSN at the meeting reported that Abdel Nasser al-Janabi from the Tawaffuq list bitterly criticized the U.S. for not ensuring a clean election process. However, there was

no threat to stir up violence or boycott the next assembly.

Comment

112. (C) So far, the announcement of the Baghdad results seems to have caused the greatest heartburn to the Sunni Arab community. Much of what we are hearing is Sunni Arab angst at seeing that Baghdad may well have a Shia Arab majority; this is an emotional as well as political shock to many. We can anticipate even more complaints when the Sunni Arab leaders realize how many parliamentary seats the Shia Islamists will capture compared to their own seats (septel). We will be working in the days ahead to keep the Sunni Arab politicians from taking such a hard-line stand in the media about the election results that they cannot retreat later. On one side we will work with the UN and the IECI to try to make the investigation process as serious as possible without giving anyone the sense that the investigations will dramatically change the results (they won't). On the other side, we will also seek to focus Sunni Arabs on setting themselves up with the Kurds and the Allawi list to negotiate entry into the government from a position of relative strength.

Press Guidance

113. (SBU) Post recommends following press guidance:

-- The IECI estimates voter turnout at about 70 percent, with over 10.8 million votes cast. This represents an increase of about 2.5 million voters from the January 2005 elections.

-- It is important that the Iraqi election be deemed credible by the Iraqi public, and the IECI should investigate allegations of fraud thoroughly.

-- The 1,100 complaints filed with the IECI to date demonstrates the extent of observer coverage as well as Iraqis' freedom to address potential cases of fraud.

-- There were over 30,000 polling stations, and it is important to keep the number of complaints in context.

-- The IECI has complaints from all political parties and must treat all complaints fairly.

KHALILZAD